

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI IT US

SUBJ: US-ITALIAN MILITARY RELATIONS

REF: STATE 217034 (DTG 012122Z SEP 76)

SUMMARY: WE BELIEVE THE PROGRAM FOR INTERCHANGING MILITARY PERSONNEL (REFTEL) IS A REASONABLE APPROACH TO HELP IMPROVE US-ITALIAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE LIMITED RESOURCES AVAILABLE. WE TOO, HOWEVER, ARE CONCERNED THAT THESE MEASURES MAY ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO THE RAPIDLY INCREASING EXPECTATIONS OF THE YOUNGER MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN MILITARY AND MAY SERVE TO AGGRAVATE AN ALREADY DIFFICULT SITUATION. WE AGREE WITH WASHINGTON ON THE DESIRABILITY OF IMPRESSING ON THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY LEADERS THE NEED FOR REFORMS, AND SUGGEST ONE APPROACH WE COULD TAKE IN THE NATO FORA. ACTION REQUESTED: WASHINGTON CONCURRENCE WITH APPROACH SUGGESTED IN PARA 3. END SUMMARY.

1. FOR THE FIRST TIME A DPQ REPLY, ITALY, IN 1976, ACKNOWLEDGES AN AWARENESS OF THE DISSATISFACTION OF THE SECRET

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YOUNGER PERSONNEL IN THE ITALIAN ARMED FORCES. THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES CLAIM THEY ARE DEVELOPING NEW NCO RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION REGULATIONS ALONG THE LINES OF THE REGULATIONS ADOPTED FOR COMMISSIONED PERSONNEL. THESE

REGULATIONS ARE AIMED AT ELIMINATING OR AT LEAST REDUCING THE INCONVENIENCES AND REASONS FOR DISCONTENT CREATED BY DISPARITIES AMONG THE THREE SERVICES, THE FREEZE ON PROMOTIONS DUE TO THE TOE LIMITATIONS FOR EACH RANK, THE PRECARIOUS ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, AND THE UNCERTAINTY OF CAREERS. ACCORDING TO THE DPQ REPLY, THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY APPROVED LEGISLATIVE MEASURES TO BRING ABOUT ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENTS FOR ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL BY (A) THE REORGANIZATION AND REASSESSMENT OF THE OPERATIONS ALLOWANCES, (B) THE REVISION OF CERTAIN REGULATIONS RELEVANT TO LEGAL STATUS, PROMOTIONS AND PAY AND (C) ASSIGNMENT OF OTHER ALLOWANCES FOR LEAVE OR SICKNESS. THE DPQ DOES NOT GIVE ANY SPECIFIC DETAILS ON THESE MEASURES. OTHER MEASURES BEING CONTEMPLATED BY THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES INCLUDE: (A) ESTABLISHMENT WITHIN EACH SERVICE OF A SINGLE ORGANIC BLOCK OF NCOS (ELIMINATING THE TOE CONSTRAINTS FOR EACH RANK); (B) AUTOMATIC PROMOTION BASED ON TIME IN GRADE; (C) CAREER INCENTIVE FOR THE MOST DESERVING; (D) AN AGE LIMIT OF 61 YEARS FOR ALL SERVICES; AND (E) THE POSSIBILITY OF NCOS FOR ALL SERVICES TO BE INCLUDED IN A SPECIAL OFFICERS' CORPS DURING THE FINAL STAGE OF THEIR CAREER.

2. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THE ABOVE MEASURES ARE LARGELY COSMETIC AND DO NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TO GET TO THE REAL SOURCES OF THE PROBLEMS, E.G., LOW PAY, ARCHAIC PERSONNEL PRACTICES, AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE. IN VIEW OF LAST YEAR'S DRASTIC FORCE CUTS UNDER THE GUISE OF RESTRUCTURING AND THE NEED TO ECONOMIZE, WE HESITATE TO SUGGEST THAT PART OF THE SOLUTION MAY REQUIRE GREATER PERSONNEL EXPENDITURES FOR FEAR THIS MAY BE USED BY THE ITALIANS TO JUSTIFY FURTHER PERSONNEL CUTS. IN ANY CASE, BASED ON PAST PERFORMANCE, WE ARE SOMEWHAT DUBIOUS WHETHER THE SCHEMES PROPOSED IN PARA 1 WILL EVER COME TO FRUITION.

3. FOR OUR PART, CONTINGENT ON WASHINGTON VIEWS, WE PROPOSE, DURING THE MULTILATERAL EXAMINATION OF ITALIAN FORCE PLANS; (A) TO NOTE THE PERSONNEL DIFFICULTIES SPELLED OUT IN THE DPQ; (B) TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE NEED IN AN ERA OF
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INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SYSTEMS, FOR A GROWING CADRE OF REGULAR PERSONNEL; AND (C) TO ASK THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES IF THEY FEEL THE PROPOSED REFORMS GO FAR ENOUGH TO COPE WITH THE RISING EXPECTATION OF THE YOUNGER MILITARY PERSONNEL. IF THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES SUGGEST THE SOLUTION MAY REQUIRE FURTHER FORCE REDUCTIONS TO OBTAIN GREATER PER CAPITA PERSONNEL EXPENDITURES, WE WILL COUNTER STRONGLY THAT ITALY HAD ALREADY DRASTICALLY CUT THE FORCE STRUCTURE IN THE INTEREST OF ECONOMY, AND ANY INCREASED PERSONNEL EXPENDITURES SHOULD BE FULLY COVERED BY INCREASED APPROPRIATIONS.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: WASHINGTON CONCURRENCE WITH ABOVE

APPROACH.STREATOR

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